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RUSSIAN BARBARITIES AND THEIR APOLOGIST.

BY THE REV. DR. ADLER, CHIEF RABBI OF THE UNITED HEBREW
CONGREGATIONS OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE.

“Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled ; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee !” (Isaiah XXXIII., 1.) On this text my revered father and predecessor in office based the discourse which he preached on the day of humiliation that was observed during the Crimean War of 1854. I well remember my father, a man of meek and gentle disposition, expressing the fear lest he might have been carried away by his patriotic fervor to level denunciations of too fierce a character against England’s foe. But it would seem as though his words were spoken with prophetic foresight, as though he had instinctively felt that the time would come when the words of Isaiah would be but too fully applicable to the Colossus of the North.

We are told by friendly critics that it is not advisable to employ the language of denunciation when referring to the barbarities practised upon the Jews of Russia. Objections are raised to the publication of *Darkest Russia*, a periodical which is issued by the Russo-Jewish Committee in London with the object of bringing to the knowledge of the civilized world authentic facts relating to the persecution of the Jewish and other non-conformist subjects of that empire. It is argued that the publi-

cation of the facts tends to irritate those invested with high authority at St. Petersburg. I fail altogether to grasp either the wisdom or the justice of these criticisms. Is it not in the power of the authorities at once to remove the source of irritation by staying their persecution? Does oppression "that maketh a wise man mad" become legal, just, and equitable when it is practised in the land of the Czars? Does persecution lose its hateful character because it is directed against the downtrodden, defenceless Hebrew? The hapless victims, indeed, are unable to lift up their voice. They must suffer in silence; they are "oppressed and afflicted and they open not their mouth." The Muscovite press is hopelessly and helplessly gagged. Shall their co-religionists who dwell in the happy land of freedom likewise hold their peace, or only speak "with bated breath and whispering humbleness"? Shall they fold their hands in sluggish apathy? "Deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain. If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it"? (Proverbs XXIV., 11, 12.) The scriptural monition comes to us with all its native force. And we regard it as our first and obvious duty to place before the world a plain and unvarnished record of the facts, so as to stir and rouse public opinion—public opinion, which, in the memorable words uttered by the Bishop of Ripon at the great Guildhall meeting, "is not the wild hysteria of a few, but the mature judgment of the many; which is the product of the experience of past ages; which is built up in the experience of the bitterness of human outrage; which when it speaks on behalf of mercy is as the voice of God speaking amongst men; which when it speaks on behalf of right is the expression of the opinion of the collective conscience of humanity appealing to the conscience of the one." I readily admit that our publication must be free from exaggeration; that it must rigorously eschew all overdrawn and colored descriptions. We therefore take the utmost pains to gather trustworthy and accurate information; an endeavor which, it need hardly be said, is beset with many difficulties.

But nothing can be more unjust than to stigmatize our narratives as unfounded tales of Muscovite barbarity, or to designate them as idle *canards* proceeding from Jewish sources. Exactly the same deprecatory epithets were levelled at the accounts given

in *The Times* of the persecution of the Jews in 1881 and 1882, until it was demonstrated to the satisfaction of all, with one exception (of which more anon), that they were absolutely authentic matters of fact.

And, being satisfied that our statements are accurate, are we not justified in holding them up to the opprobrium of the civilized world? When Mr. Gladstone, by his famous letter to Lord Aberdeen, made all Europe ring with the story of the sufferings of the prisoners in the dungeons of the kingdom of the Two Sicilies, did he then wrap up his statements in sugared words and conventional phraseology? When he felt it his duty to denounce the wrongs that had been committed in Bulgaria, did he permit himself to be muzzled from fear of wounding Turkish susceptibilities? And may we not turn to higher and holier exemplars? When the great seers of old were commissioned to reprove the mighty empires of the East for their oppression and cruelties, did they seek to make their messages palatable by soft flatteries, glossing over all that was vile and contemptible? Did they not portray wrong in all its naked hideousness? Did they not, in words aglow with fiery indignation, teach the immortal lesson that righteousness exalteth a nation, but that ruin and shame will be the inevitable lot of a people that violates the eternal and immutable principles of justice and mercy?

These sacred principles are being flagrantly and violently trodden under foot in the land of the North. It would be beyond the scope of the present article to describe in minute detail the various phases of the persecution to which the Jew of Russia is at present subjected. It may be of advantage to present them in a succinct outline. With the downfall of Ignatieff the outrages which had disgraced the years 1881 and 1882 came to an end. Whether this downfall was brought about, or at least hastened, by the protests raised in the public press, and especially by the memorable meeting at the Mansion House, I will not now stay to inquire. It has been cynically said that the Muscovite does not mind acting brutally, but that he entertains the strongest possible objection to being regarded by others as capable of acting in this fashion. After 1882 we hear no more of bloodshed, pillage, and outrages on women. But other methods were sought to render the lives of the despised Hebrews insupportable. The greatest hardship under which they have suffered from the earliest

period of their settlement was their restriction to fifteen *Gubernia*, besides Poland, as places of residence. These fifteen provinces represent a district of comparatively large area, but lacking in towns of any great commercial importance. Yet the four and a half or five millions who inhabit Russia and Poland managed to earn their subsistence. We hear of them in the towns as the principle traders and artisans,* in the villages as farmers, mill-owners, and dairymen. They were also tacitly permitted to establish themselves in important commercial centres outside the pale of settlement, still greater facilities being given to craftsmen, merchants of the first guild, and those who had received a university education. In the fateful year of 1882, after the excesses had ceased, legislative measures were enacted intended to withdraw all the privileges by which the hardship of the settlement restrictions had, in some measure, been mitigated. The Jews were prohibited from residing outside any of the towns in the pale, and were forbidden to own, farm, or manage landed property. At first these May laws, as they were termed from the month in which they were promulgated, were permitted to remain inoperative. But since the summer of last year they have been enforced by stringent orders from headquarters, with the effect of crowding enormous populations into the congested towns. Artisans are expelled with indignities, as though they were criminals, from cities where they had hitherto gained an honorable subsistence. Men of education are no longer permitted to exercise the professions for which they have been diligently trained. Laws, not inaptly likened to thumbscrews, that had long since fallen into desuetude, are revived and enforced with the utmost rigor, and with a cynical contempt of human rights. Day after day brings us tidings of thousands, who have no fault other than that of being Jews, having been expelled from their homes, and exposed to the most cruel suffering and privation.

What is the result of these measures? The condition of the victims is ineffably sad. Their staff of bread is broken. Instead of enjoying health and vigor, as, owing to their sobriety and temperance, they formerly did, they are now being slowly starved to death. A correspondent testifies: "Among all the population of vast Russia I never met with persons looking more wretched

* There are nearly 300,000 artisans in the fifteen provinces of the pale. Cf. *Données statistiques sur le nombre des Juifs exerçans des métiers*, etc. Saint-Petersbourg, 1888.

than the emaciated Jews. In all Europe there is no class of men who find it harder to earn a morsel of bread than is the case with nine-tenths of the Russian Jews." No wonder, then, that an exodus has commenced as great and as impetuous as that which took place ten years ago. The poor exiles pour forth over the lines of railway leading from the frontier towns of Russia to the ports of Hamburg and Bremen. A correspondent of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, giving an account of the scenes that are daily to be witnessed at the Charlottenburg railway station, commences with the quotation: "If you have tears, prepare to shed them now." And he proceeds to describe the utter wretchedness which the arrival of each train discloses. Haggard men and women are there so weak that they are hardly able to walk, children in scanty raiment, and whole families that had lived in comparative affluence driven at a day's notice from their homesteads and the land which, with all its faults, they still loved.

On hearing the sad tale of all this misery, one is naturally anxious to investigate the causes which have induced this persecution. Those best entitled to form a judgment trace it to religious intolerance and to the insensate thirst for Panslavism which has seized upon so many Russian minds. M. Pobiedonostzeff, the Procurator of the Holy Synod, who unhappily enjoys the full confidence of the Czar, is a fanatic by conviction, and cannot tolerate that the land should be inhabited by those who do not profess the orthodox creed. Hence persecutions of a similar character, though of less intensity, are enacted against Protestants, Catholics, and especially Uniates (Catholics who use the Slav liturgy). Professor Geffcken* writes: "If the latter refuse to have their children baptized by orthodox popes, they are unsparingly deported. Twenty thousand Uniates alone have been removed from the western provinces to Szaratow. Those who remain at home have Cossacks quartered upon them, and all sorts of compulsory means are resorted to in order to stamp out this sect." Trustworthy information has just reached us of the rigorous treatment to which the Stundists are subjected. Persons suspected of belonging to this sect are declared ineligible for any post or employment connected with the village administration. It would almost seem as though a pale of residence were being created for them. But the persecution of the Jew is of a greatly

*"Russia under Alexander III." *New Review*, September, 1891.

aggravated character, and carried on with a more relentless malice, for the following reasons: He is not a Slav, and the watchword has gone forth, "Russia for the Russians." Despite all the obstacles with which he has been hedged, he has thriven. The Jew, whom the Russian hardly ever names without an opprobrious epithet, has outstripped the orthodox Slav in the struggle for life. Hence the present desire to crush and to exterminate the poor Israelite.

But a writer in the August number of THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW aspires to throw "new light" on this question. Professor Goldwin Smith alleges that the source of the troubles is not religious, but social and economic; that persecution is not the tendency of the Russian or of the church to which he belongs; but that the Jew has brought these calamities upon himself through his parasitic tendencies and his tribal exclusiveness. Verily, these arguments deserve neither to be characterized as light (they resemble rather an *ignis fatuus*) nor can they claim to be regarded as new, seeing that they constitute for the most part the repetition of statements and assertions that were dished up in former articles that appeared in *The Nineteenth Century*. It is not my intention to repeat the arguments with which I traversed my adversary's position touching our alleged tribalism and lack of patriotism, for Mr. Gladstone—no mean arbiter in a controversy—has stated that "when Mr. Goldwin Smith made against the Jews what may be called a charge of incivism, he was met by an effective defence."* Nor need I advert to those arguments which have been answered by Mr. Bendavid in the September number of this REVIEW.†

Before proceeding to answer the specific indictments preferred by this advocate of the Russian Government, I would briefly touch his plea that the Jewish accounts of the atrocities of 1881 and 1882, published in the London *Times*, were in most cases exaggerated and in some to an extravagant degree. Literary encounters with that gentleman on the part of champions immeasurably doughtier than I, notably Mr. Herbert Spencer,‡ have taught me extreme wariness in accepting as final a statement emanating from

* "The Irish Demand," by the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone. *Nineteenth Century*, February, 1887.

† I do not know what evidence Mr. Bendavid has discovered for the Hebrew descent of Charles Dickens. George Eliot was a profound admirer of the Hebrew genius, but she was not, as far as I have been able to ascertain, of Jewish origin.

‡ "Goldwin Smith as a Critic." *Contemporary Review*, March, 1882.

him. He would palliate the outrages on women committed in 1882 by contending that they could be reduced to half a dozen authenticated cases. I will assume for a moment that this was so. Does this lessen the criminality of the deed? Was not an insult offered by a ruffianly tax-gatherer to one Kentish maiden, the daughter of a tiler of Dartford, sufficient to stir England to rebellion? Mr. Smith commends the reports of the British consuls comprised in two blue-books of 1881 to our earnest study. I join in this recommendation, and would ask the professor to read carefully the second blue-book concerning the treatment of the Jews in Russia (Russia No. 2, 1882). He would find that Sir E. Thornton, H. B. M. ambassador at St. Petersburg, writing to Earl Granville (number 28), encloses an extract from the *Golos* newspaper saying that "in Balta alone cases of violation were numerous. Of these, ten are already known, but the remaining victims are ashamed to come forward." He further writes that an article in the *Golos*, also quoted, admits that the charges brought by foreign newspapers against the administrative abilities of the Russian authorities are but too true, though they may be exaggerated, *but that it is absurd to speak of exaggeration when actual facts are beyond all description*. Could there be a more thorough vindication of the accuracy of the reports of the London *Times*?

But to return to the apology advanced for the anti-Semitic movement in Russia. "The Eastern Church has always been tolerant and free from the stain of persecution." Granted that it was so in former days. Does history not record sudden transformations due to the influence of one masterful mind? And has Russia, indeed, manifested invariably such perfect tolerance? One who has studied the fortunes of Israel in the land of the North will readily remember the horrible sufferings inflicted by Bogdan Chmielnicki, when his hordes of Cossacks swept through Poland intent on pillage and bloodshed, first in 1648, when they murdered many thousands of Jews, and again in 1654, when entire communities in Lithuania were almost completely annihilated, the popes in many cases instigating the massacres.

"The Russian government has never been guilty of persecution. The movement has its main cause in circumstances purely economical, inasmuch as the Hebrews are a parasitic race." On

the very same day that this imputation was published its falsehood was triumphantly proved by men whose information was not derived at second hand, but who had studied the question on the spot. I refer to the articles on "Jewish Colonization" and "The Russian Persecution," by Mr. Arnold White and Mr. E. B. Lanin, which appeared in *The New Review* of August. In graphic language they portray the activity of the Jews as contrasted with the idleness of the general population. If they succeed in trade better than their Christian competitors, it is because the wares they manufacture are of better quality and are sold at a more reasonable price. In addition to the traders there are hundreds of thousands of able bodied men who are engaged in arduous manual toil. There are the artisans of Berditchew, the wharf-laborers of Odessa, the corn-porters of Nicolaieff, the farm-laborers of Kremenchug, in addition to many thousand agriculturalists settled in various colonies who are marked by all the characteristics of a peasantry of the highest order. But I would especially commend M. Leroy-Beaulieu's great work "*L'Empire des Tsars et les Russes*" to those who desire to study the question thoroughly. He devotes an entire chapter (Volume III, pp. 613—654) to the condition of the Jews, and examines the charge of parasitism brought against them. One striking argument of his deserves citation:—

"Le Juif, affirme-t-on, a en aversion tout travail productif; c'est essentiellement un exploiteur vivant et s'enrichissant du labeur d'autrui. Cela encore peut être vrai, du moins en un sens. Le Juif n'est, le plus souvent, qu'un intermédiaire entre le producteur et le consommateur, et moins il y a de ces intermédiaires, mieux il vaut pour une société. Mais doit-on pour cela poser en principe que tout marchand, tout négociant, tout intermédiaire est un parasite? Et si cela est vrai du Juif ou du Sémite, comment ne le serait-ce pas également du Chrétien ou de l'Aryen? Ne sait-on point que la circulation est une fonction essentielle du corps social, comme de tout corps vivant?" *

But Mr. Smith's most calumnious and mischievous indictment

* "The Jew, they say, holds all productive labor in aversion; he is essentially a trader, living and enriching himself by the labor of another. This is perhaps true, at least in one sense. The Jew is most frequently only an intermediary between the producer and the consumer, and the less there is of the intermediary the better it is for society. But ought one on this account to lay down the principle that every merchant, trader, and middle-man is a parasite? And if that is true of the Jew or of the Semite, why will it not be equally true of the Christian and the Aryan? Does not every body know that the circulation is an essential function of the body social, as of every living body?"

appears at the close of the article, in the allegation that Nihilism is supposed to be recruited partly from the Jews. It is difficult to use the language of moderation respecting a writer who flings forth an accusation such as this, resting on no more solid a foundation than a mere supposition,—an accusation which might be fraught with the direst consequences to the unhappy people against whom it is recklessly levelled. Such an act is most fitly characterized by the scriptural metaphor of a madman who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, and says, “Am I not in sport?” Penal codes and social vexations are but too well calculated to sting the Jews of Russia into hatred. But so deeply is the virtue of loyalty ingrained in the Hebrew mind, so ardent is his love of law and order, so profound is his horror of assassination, that the proportion of those who are mixed up with revolutionary plots is extraordinarily small. This is conclusively demonstrated in an article in *Darkest Russia*, entitled, “Are the Russian Jews Dynamite Conspirators?”—where it is shown, by reference to the official lists, that of the thirty persons who were proved to be implicated in the attempts to murder the present Emperor and his august father, there was not one Jew, and only one Jewess, who, however, having linked her fortunes to a person of the orthodox church, could hardly be regarded as a member of the Jewish community.

In dismissing the professor the reflection presses itself upon us. Much might be said in extenuation of the guilt of the Autocrat of all the Russias, shut off, as he is, from the free and wholesome current of public opinion by a dense wall of officialism. Some allowance might even be made for the Procurator of the Holy Synod, who, Torquemada-like, persuades himself that he is working “*in majorem Dei gloriam*.” But no excuse can be offered for one who, privileged to breathe the air of freedom and religious tolerance which wafts through the British Empire, does not hesitate to palliate wrongs, dark and huge as the mountain, and to justify barbarities that cry aloud to heaven for cessation and redress.

But the question forces itself upon every thinking man, “*Quousque tandem?*”—How will this end? An exodus of extraordinary dimensions is progressing. Many thousands emigrate to the United States, that great country whose hospitality is as

unbounded as are its resources, and where they prove themselves diligent, thrifty, and law-abiding citizens. A certain proportion filters into this country, where they have established one branch of industry, the cheap-clothing trade, and largely developed another, the cheap-boot trade. Thanks to the admirable education which their children receive at the Jews' Free School and similar institutions, these foreigners are being slowly but surely assimilated with the population among whom they have chosen to dwell. Large numbers flee to the Holy Land (a veritable Palestine hunger having seized the poor cowed refugees), where several agricultural colonies have been established by the munificence of Baron Edmond de Rothschild and the enterprise of other lovers of Zion. Travellers speak hopefully of the success of these colonies.

It is, however, considered neither wise nor expedient to encourage large settlements of Jews in countries which, like the United States, already number a considerable Hebrew population, or in those which, like our own tight little island, are already over-congested. And here I may mention incidentally that much exaggeration is indulged in concerning the inflow of dense hordes of pauper aliens into London. The publication of the returns issued by the Board of Trade shows very clearly that the increase of the immigration of the Polish Jews into London in the current year, as compared with the last, has been but inconsiderable. But in order to stay all complaints on this head, Baron de Hirsch has propounded a scheme to promote a vast immigration of the Jewish race from Russia to those parts of the world which are as yet sparsely populated. He has devoted two million pounds sterling to the establishment of colonies in various parts of North and South America and certain regions of Africa—colonies for agricultural, commercial, and other purposes. He has enlisted the aid of several men renowned for their great business capacity—men such as Lord Rothschild, Sir Julian Goldsmid, Mr. F. D. Mocatto, Mr. Benjamin Louis Cohen, and M. S. H. Goldschmidt—to aid him in carrying out his colossal scheme. A settlement has already been commenced in the Argentine Republic, and the latest advices I have received speak very encouragingly of the intelligence and industry of the settlers.

And yet, whoever reflects upon the problem will admit that emigration, however large the scale on which it is conducted,

however princely the munificence by which it is subventioned, cannot be viewed as a true solution of the Russo-Jewish question. Emigration can affect but a small proportion of the legion of persecuted Israelites. Even granted that the Czar will let his people go, yet the bulk of the Israelite population must remain behind. They either will not or cannot quit the soil where they have been born and which their fathers inhabited centuries before the Russian appeared there. “Des milliers sont partis ; des millions sont restés,” says Leroy-Beaulieu ;—“Thousands have gone ; millions remain.” The sovereign remedy for all the ills from which the Jews of Russia have suffered so long is to be found in the one word “Freizügigkeit.” Liberty to circulate throughout the length and breadth of the land ; freedom to settle in every district of that vast empire, with its eight million square miles and its ample means of subsistence for all its indwellers ; the abrogation of every restrictive law and degrading disability. When, when will the Czar pronounce that redeeming word, so that happier days may dawn for his Hebrew subjects, and a new era of prosperity commence for the whole empire ?

HERMANN ADLER.